

Tips for Becoming a Non Smoker

If you're a smoker you've probably thought about quitting several times. If you've tried to quit smoking, you know how hard it can be. If you weren't successful, you may feel that quitting is just something that is too hard for you to do.

Quitting **IS** hard. Nearly half of all smokers try to quit smoking each year and come face to face with their addiction to nicotine. Nicotine is considered one of the most addictive substances we know and overcoming your dependence on it takes a commitment and a workable plan. That plan should include:

- Getting ready
- Getting support
- Learning new skills and behaviors
- Getting medication and use it correctly.
- Being prepared for relapse or difficult situations

Plan Ahead

You'll be more successful at quitting if you take the time to get ready for this change in your lifestyle. Set a quit date; a week or two from now would be best. You could choose the first of the week, a holiday or the next full moon; it doesn't matter what date you select. Pick a date and begin planning for being a non-smoker on that day.

For about 24 hours, keep a log of when you smoke. Smoke normally so that when you review the log later you'll be able to see what times in the day or during which activities you smoke the most. If this is not your first stab at quitting, think about your past attempts. What happened to get you to smoke again? Is there a possibility that it or something similar can happen again? Make a plan for overcoming these challenges.

Consider nicotine replacement products to increase your chance at being successful. There are several types of nicotine replacement products to choose from: patches in varying strengths, gum, lozenges, and oral sprays. Choose only one! These products can all be purchased without a prescription. They deliver small doses of nicotine into the body to relieve some of the withdrawal symptoms. Since they do not contain the tar and carbon monoxide that are largely responsible for cigarettes dangerous health consequences, they can be a great help in weaning you off nicotine.

Visit your doctor if you feel that additional medications to help you deal with the stressors of quitting would be beneficial. For optimum effect, these medications should be in your system for two weeks before you quit. A prescription medicine and an over-the-counter product can be used simultaneously to help you quit.

About a week before your quit date begin making changes in your behavior and your environment. For example, don't smoke in the car anymore. Get the interior of your car cleaned; don't forget to empty all the ashtrays. You might consider removing the lighter and ashtray in case you are tempted to smoke. Confine your smoking to one room of your home or better yet – go outside. Do things that make smoking inconvenient.

Get Support

Studies have shown that you have a better chance of being successful if you have a support team rooting for you. Tell your family and friends that you are going to quit smoking and that you would appreciate their help. Let them know what they can do to help you: be a walking partner, dinner guest, or shopping companion. If they smoke, ask them not to smoke or leave cigarettes around to tempt you.



1-800-QUIT NOW

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Try quitting with a partner or join a cessation group with regular meetings. You'll be surprised at the level of camaraderie and positive support that develops when a group of people with one goal come together.

There are also several internet sites you can access to help you with coping methods. Such as:

- The National Partnership to Help Pregnant Smokers Quit at:
<http://www.helppregnant smokersquit.org/default.asp>,
- The American Lung Association's Freedom from Smoking at:
<https://www.kintera.org/site/apps/kb/home/login.asp?c=dvLUK9O0E&b=38973&membershipreq=83912&targetURL=http%3A%2F%2Fwww%2Elungusa%2Eorg%2Fsite%2Fpp%2Easpx%3Fc%3DdvLUK9O0E%26b%3D22933>,
- American Cancer Society's Guide for Quitting Smoking at:
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_10_13X_Guide_for_Quitting_Smoking.asp,

1-800-QUIT NOW is a free telephone cessation service. Your phone call will be answered by a trained cessation specialist from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM every day.

Learn new Skills and Behaviors

Not only have you become addicted to nicotine, you've developed habits that you now associate with lighting and smoking cigarettes, such as: watching tv and smoking, playing video games and smoking, going out in the evenings with friends and smoking. It may be difficult for awhile to participate in these activities without experiencing some intense cravings to smoke. It's not necessary to give up your favorite pastimes and friends forever; but until you build up your confidence in not smoking it may be best to find some alternatives. Maybe this would be a good time for you and a non-smoking friend to join a gym or learn a new hobby. Avoid alcohol; alcohol may lower your resolve to be a non-smoker.

One of the best ways to keep your mind off cigarettes is to think of something else. If you usually have cigarettes after a meal try washing the dishes by hand, taking out the trash, playing with the kids. You may want to take a walk or work in the yard.

If you feel that you must have something in your hand, fiddle with a straw, pencil or something else about the size of a cigarette. Do you feel overcome with the urge to keep something in your mouth? Try raw vegetables, sugarless gum or candy, and popcorn. To better handle your cravings consider:

- Drink a lot of liquids, especially water. Try herbal teas or fruit juices. Limit coffee, soft drinks, or alcohol – they can increase your urge to smoke.
- Avoid sugar and fatty foods. Try low-calorie foods for snacking – carrots and other vegetables, sugarless gum, air-popped popcorn, or low-fat cottage cheese. Don't skip meals.
- Exercise regularly and moderately. Regular exercise helps. Joining an exercise group provides a healthy activity and a new routine.
- Get more sleep. Try to go to sleep earlier and get more rest.
- Take deep breaths. Distract yourself. When cravings hit, do something else immediately, such as talking to someone, getting busy with a task, or taking deep breaths.
- Change your habits. Use a different route to work, eat breakfast in a different place, or get up from the table right away after eating.
- Do something to reduce your stress. Take a hot bath or shower, read a book, or exercise.

It can be difficult to stay motivated to quit. If you feel your resolve diminishing consider:

- Remind yourself every day why you are quitting.
- Avoid places you connect with smoking.
- Develop a plan for relieving stress
- Rely on your friends, family and support group for help.
- Avoid alcohol. It lowers your chances for success.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and www.smokefree.gov

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